

DEVELOPING FUTURE SPECIAL EDUCATORS GRANT 2022-2024

Request for Application (RFA)

I. PURPOSE OF THE DEVELOPING FUTURE SPECIAL EDUCATORS GRANT

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Bureau of Special Education is requesting applications from Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) interested in developing or expanding focused efforts and experiences to engage secondary/postsecondary students in working with students with disabilities as a means to inspire the next generation of special educators. Through experiential learning, secondary/postsecondary students will support students with disabilities through participation in structured activities, programs, and/or events with guidance and oversight from current educators. The ultimate goal is to recruit future special education professionals by engaging them in authentic, experiential opportunities in support of students with disabilities.

Outcomes of the Developing Future Special Educators Grant include:

- The establishment or expansion of experiential learning opportunities aligned to special education career pathways with purposeful recruitment and marketing to future special educators.
- The support of current educators in advancing future special educators' knowledge and understanding of the varied opportunities within the field of special education and how to address the social-emotional, behavioral, and/or learning of students with disabilities.
- The increased interest of secondary/postsecondary students in pursuing a career as a special educator by providing experiential learning that supports the success of students with disabilities.

II. APPLICATION CRITERIA AND GRANT PRIORITIES

A. ELIGIBILITY

Local Education Agencies and Institutions of Higher Education are encouraged to apply. Eligible Local Education Agencies include: school districts, approved private schools, career technical education centers, charter schools, cyber charter schools, and intermediate units. Grant monies will be awarded to applicants that:

- commit at least one educator to develop or expand focused efforts and experiences to engage secondary/postsecondary students in supporting students with disabilities; while
- educating secondary/postsecondary students on future job opportunities that exist in the field of special education; and
- support secondary/postsecondary students in experiential programming that:
 1. engages students in the development and implementation of focused learning efforts; and
 2. offers purposeful opportunities for future educators to learn from those currently in the field.

Consortium applications consisting of up to 3 collaborative partners from LEAs and/or IHEs are encouraged. Only one application per consortium is permitted. Grant funds will be shared amongst the LEAs/IHEs that are part of the consortium.

The funding available for each successful grant applicant will be available from the date of the award through June 30, 2024.

The Developing Future Special Educators grantees are eligible for up to \$25,000.00 to develop or enhance current programming. Grantees are encouraged to implement one or more, unique experiential learning opportunities during the course of the grant period (i.e., "study buddies", "teaching assistants", and "summer learning camps" for all secondary/postsecondary students could equate to \$25,000 in grant funding).

B. ASSURANCES

The grantee must agree to the following to ensure quality and fidelity to the stated purposes of the grant.

- 1) Assurance that all activities and expenditures of funds conducted in association with the grant are in direct compliance with the provisions of the funding authorities.
- 2) Assurance that all required financial and program data is reported in a timely manner on a schedule established by the grantor.
- 3) Assurance that program staff will participate in all required PaTTAN/PDE training and technical assistance activities.
- 4) Assurance that all aspects of the experiential learning opportunities - including records, communication, space for delivery of service, etc. will comply with regulations regarding student privacy and confidentiality.

C. GRANT PRIORITIES

The following essential program priorities must be addressed in the grant application.

- 1) **Identify experiential learning opportunities:** The grantee must provide a description of specific experiential learning opportunities that will be offered to secondary/postsecondary students as a means to engage them in working with students with disabilities.
 - a. Examples of experiential learning opportunities include, but are not limited to, the following:

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Local Affiliation

- Inclusive opportunities – such as school/campus-run business
- Peer tutoring or peer support programs
- Summer academies or camps
- Student teaching assistants (in-class peer supports)

National/International Affiliation

- Best Buddies - <https://www.bestbuddies.org/>
- Friendship Circles (Peer-to-Peer Programs or Lunch Buddies) - <https://www.friendshipcircle.org/>
- Unified Sports - <https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/sports/unified-sports>

- b. Selected programs may be newly created or previously established experiential learning opportunities for which the applicants want to expand to include a focus on developing future special educators.

2) **Engage future special educators in intentional career pathway development***: The grantee must address the following career pathway topics with the participating secondary students:

(Career Ready Resources: <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/CareerReadyPA/Pages/default.aspx>)

- a. **Awareness of career options** - the grantee must address how opportunities and/or resources that expand the students' awareness of the variety of careers available in the field of special education beyond the program(s) for which they are engaged will be provided. Career options may include: autism specialist, educational interpreter, paraprofessional, teacher of the deaf.
- b. **Connection to career pathways and career clusters available** - the grantee must address the post-high school goals of the participating secondary students through instruction and/or counseling to assist them as they plan and select courses and elective classes. Connecting the students to pathways will make their secondary education more relevant and prepare them to make informed post-high school decisions.
- c. **Eligibility requirements for admission into educator preparation programs** - the grantee must address special educator preparation program options with the participating secondary students. Session topics may include: higher education program options, prerequisites for admission, financial aid, campus visits, and/or dual enrollment credit options.

***IHE grantees must address career pathway development with a focus on implications for secondary/postsecondary students** – the grantee must address the development and/or enhancement of participating students' knowledge and experiences with special education career options and requirements.

3) **Participate in professional development**: The grantee's identified educators must engage in training sessions delivered virtually, to expand their knowledge and understanding of person-first language, presuming competence, principles of Universal Design for Learning, and career pathways.

- a. Identified educators must complete 4 hours of virtual professional development, and
- b. Engage future special educators in the learning of key concepts, career pathways, and other specific programming needs,
- c. Culminating in a statewide showcase of efforts.

Additional professional development opportunities may be available to grantees including participation in statewide conferences such as the PA Department of Education Conference, The Special Education Leadership Academy, Secondary Transition Conference, and/or HELIX Conference.

4) **Engage family/caregivers***: The grantee must engage family/caregivers in understanding the experiential learning opportunities and the roles of all participating students. Engagement of family/caregivers may include one or more of the following: direct outreach to potential student participants; direct mailing to all families announcing the experiential learning opportunities and encouraging participation; offering a recruitment session to families/caregivers to discuss experiential learning opportunities; or featuring grant updates on the LEA/IHE website.

- a. Engagement of families/caregivers of future special educators should address their support role and how the experiential learning opportunity could lead to a career as a special educator.
- b. Engagement of families/caregivers of students with disabilities should address their roles in the experiential learning opportunities and how families/caregivers can support them.

*** IHE grantees must engage the community** in promoting the grant-related experiential learning opportunities designed to inspire the next generation of special education personnel.

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- 5) **Implement a plan:** The grantee must develop an action plan to address the development and implementation of a program that engages future special educators in active planning and/or execution of experiential learning opportunities that provide positive outcomes for students with disabilities.
- 6) **Collect and report data:** The grantee will provide reports on the overall outcomes of the implementation of the experiential learning opportunities including:
 - a. Assess future special educators before and after the experiential learning opportunities
 - b. Report numbers of programs/activities/learning opportunities offered
 - c. Report numbers of secondary/postsecondary students participating in programs/activities/learning opportunities
 - d. Report numbers of secondary/postsecondary students engaged in career counseling specific to special education
 - e. Share impact data on the programs/activities/experiences
 - f. Assess current educators overseeing the programs/activities/learning opportunities
- 7) **Sustainability:** The grantee must describe the vision for sustaining and/or continued expansion of the experiential learning opportunities at the end of the grant period.

D. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Grant awardees will receive support as follows:

- 1) Training on person-first language, presuming competence, principles of Universal Design for Learning, and career pathways.
- 2) Technical assistance provided by PaTTAN educational consultants.
- 3) Technical assistance and networking opportunities supporting the following:
 - i. Initial grant application training on required grant priorities;
 - ii. PaTTAN and PDE trainings and/or meetings designed to provide support for funded project priorities; and
 - iii. Other assistance, as determined by the needs of the grantee.

III. BUDGET

The funding available to each successful grant application is as follows:

- A maximum of \$25,000.00 is available and will be distributed over a two-year period. Up to five experiential learning opportunities per grant applicant is permissible.
- A minimum of one educator is required to participate in the grant activities.
 - Educators may have oversight for more than one experiential learning opportunity.
 - There is a maximum of five experiential learning opportunities per LEA/IHE grant application.
- Grant funds available to LEAs/IHEs is based on the number and/or costs associated with the experiential learning opportunities offered.

The following terms will apply:

- Upon completion of Phase 1 activities, (Timeline: From date of award through completion of Phase 1 Activities) the grantee will receive a stipend disbursement of half of the overall grantee's award contingent upon submission of data and participation in the required, virtual professional development.
- Upon completion of Phase 2 activities, (Timeline: From completion of Phase 1 Activities through June 30, 2024), the grantee will receive a stipend disbursement of the remaining half of the grantee awarded funds contingent upon submission of data and participation in the required, virtual professional development.
- Equipment costs, clothing (except work uniforms – not streetwear), gift cards, food and entertainment, and student salaries are not allowable expenses.
- General supplies must be purchased prior to May 31, 2024.

IV. APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The application can be accessed from the [APR Repository Webpage: Attracting Special Education Personnel](https://fs25.formsite.com/3fHiZQ/FutureEducators/form_login.html) or using the following link: https://fs25.formsite.com/3fHiZQ/FutureEducators/form_login.html

Applications must be submitted by **3:00 PM on Friday, April 22, 2022**.

Note: Use of the Google Chrome browser will allow for easiest navigation. Applicants have the ability to save and return to the application as needed. The online application platform will also enable applicants to provide electronic signatures.